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LENS 1

**Purpose:** To declare the positive points of *Dear Mr. Henshaw* and the reasons why it should be read in schools and how children can relate to it. Other teachers will ask why I think this book should be part of the curriculum.

**Genre:** Interview

**Audience:** Teachers

**Engagement:** The thoughts and the points that I found most important from reading *Dear Mr. Henshaw*.

Reader-Response: *Dear Mr. Henshaw*

**Teacher:** Why do you think this book will be a good choice for students to read?

**Me:** We all have read books and stories that are written the same. It sets a plot and the author

either writes in the first or third person. Then, the book goes back and forth between the

characters, getting more in depth with their conversations. In *Dear Mr. Henshaw* by

Beverly Cleary, Leigh Botts writes letters to his favorite and beloved author Boyd

Henshaw. It gives the students a different perspective ad genre of how to write a story and

it’s a way for them to connect literature, since they can write letters to others as well. It

may take them awhile to see the true meaning of this story. When I was reading it for the

first time, I didn’t truly appreciate how it was written, since it was only written as diary

entries. By the end, however, I know what the author wants students to get out of this book.

She wants young readers to realize that there are many forms of writing and that you can get

your ideas and thoughts across in any way, as long as the ideas are clear.

**Teacher:** When you said about connecting the genre to their real life, what exactly do you mean

by that? How can this help in school?

**Me:** I remember when I was a little girl and I was into writing. I used to write in my journal, or

diary, and jot things down that made me really happy or something in my life that upset me.

It gave me the chance to vent without really talking about it. Also, when I was in fifth

grade, we had pen pals from a different school, if I am remembering correctly, that we

would write to once or twice a month. This was a great experience since we got to make a

new friend and it also got us to write and fun at the same time. Students can do this now,

whether they start pen pals of their own or write to friends and family members that they

have lost contact with. Writing a little bit each day can improve their skills and it was also

something that we were taught to know how to do when I was in middle school. It might

have changed now, since technology is so advanced, but if they don’t write letters, they can

send emails in the same format.

**Teacher:** What exactly can the students get from reading this book?

**Me:** First, students can relate to Leigh is some way. Everyone has something that bothers them

in life, whether it is parents getting a divorce or getting bullied. Leigh goes through both of

these. As the students are reading the text, they can see they are not alone and there is

someone who has the same problems and that in the end things won’t always turn out the

way you want them to.

Second, like I mentioned in the beginning, it gives the students a variety of genres to read. As it states in the book *The Pleasures of Reading Children’s Literature* by Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer, “Ardent readers enjoy the craft of what they read, so teachers will want to help children become aware of the ways in which texts communicate distinctive experiences—to help them understand how writers’ specific choices of words, phrases, events, and so on to work together to create the flavor and meanings of individual texts” (p. 38). We as teachers have to provide the opportunity for our young readers to learn to appreciate and like to read a variety of texts. This will help them understand what the author is trying to get across.

The last thing they can get is pleasure from reading. One of the pleasures that I got from *The Pleasures of Reading Children’s Literature* is “the pleasure of understanding: of seeing how literature not only mirrors life but also comments on it and encourages readers to consider the meaning of their own existence” (p. 25). Authors write books for a specific purpose and we all can relate to it in some way. As stated before a few times, young readers can really connect with books if they can see how it connects with their own life. They will also see that Leigh isn’t the only one with family and school problems.